



ClimbAID

سَمَا

SAMA *(Arabic)*

verb

soared, rose, climbed

REPORT ON ACTIVITIES 2024



DEAR READER

With over 123.2 million people displaced worldwide, the need for safe spaces, connection, and mental wellbeing has never been more urgent.

In Lebanon, escalating conflict and mass displacement repeatedly interrupted our programmes — especially in the Beqaa Valley. Rising insecurity, economic hardship, and regional uncertainty made it increasingly difficult to plan and carry out regular activities. Many sessions were cancelled or adapted on short notice, and by the end of the year, we were forced to suspend many of our programmes.

At the same time, work from previous years came to fruition: the publication of a peer-reviewed study and the premiere of our film, SAMA marked significant moments for ClimbAID.

The research study, published in Conflict and Health, highlights the mental health impact of

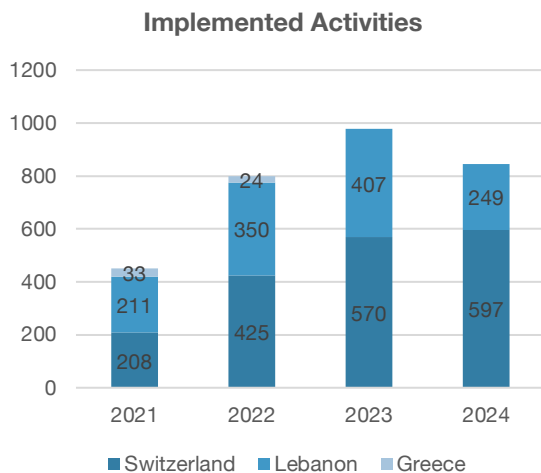
our bouldering-based psychosocial programme for conflict-affected youth. SAMA, filmed in 2022 and 2023, tells the story of young people shaped by displacement and exclusion — and also by trust, friendship, and discovery through climbing.

Meanwhile in Switzerland, our work continued to grow. With 15 active groups and over 1'200 people involved, the MaxiFamily project now spans the country — supported by a committed network of volunteers, participants, and partner organisations.

This report reflects on a year marked by interruption and continuity. It documents where we stand, what has carried through, and what may come next — thanks to all those who continue to believe in this work.

FACTS & FIGURES

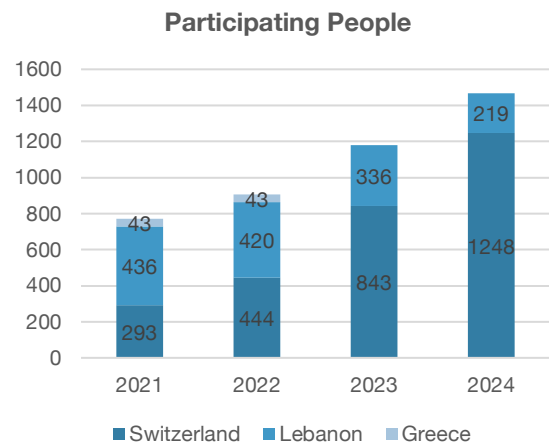
In 2024, ClimbAID implemented 846 climbing and other sport activities in Switzerland and Lebanon:



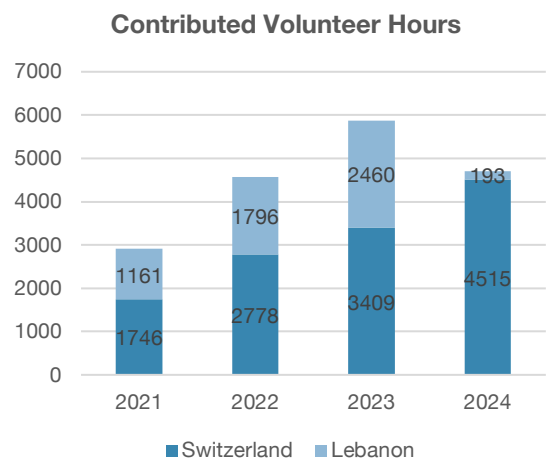
Besides the regular sessions, ClimbAID implemented a variety of other activities in 2024, including:

- A boulder weekend in Chironico with 76 participants from all over Switzerland.
- A five-day summer camp in the Alps combining climbing and hiking for 11 participants from Geneva.
- A boulder and pizza session at our bouldering wall "Würfel" at the Stadionbrache in Zurich.
- Four training sessions for 15 new MaxiFamily Coordinators.
- A three-day training in psychosocial support, child protection and more for the core and volunteer team in Lebanon.
- Two sport climbing courses and two route-setting workshops in Lebanon.

Across Switzerland and Lebanon, 1'467 people were involved in these activities:



These activities were enabled by more than 4'707 hours of volunteer work:





Study Confirms the Mental Health Impact of YouCLIMB

In October 2024, Conflict and Health published peer-reviewed research confirming the effectiveness of ClimbAID's bouldering-based intervention, YouCLIMB, in improving the mental wellbeing of conflict-affected youth in Lebanon.

The study followed Syrian, Palestinian, and vulnerable Lebanese youth over eight psychosocial climbing sessions and found significant reductions in psychological distress and measurable gains in mental wellbeing, compared to a waitlist control group.

Participants also described deeper emotional changes and strengthened coping skills. One shared: "I changed from a depressed person—now, when I laugh, I am surprised at myself."

In a setting where access to mental health support is severely limited, these findings underscore the potential of climbing-based interventions to support healing, connection, and emotional growth.

climbaid.org/study



LEBANON

In 2024, our work was severely disrupted by the country's deepening crisis. Armed conflict, mass displacement, and escalating insecurity forced us—more than once—to pause planned activities, making it another challenging year in the project's history.

Despite everything, we managed to run psychosocial bouldering sessions, worked toward opening The ARC to the public, and organised two route-setting workshops in collaboration with the Lebanese Climbing Federation.

CONTEXT

Lebanon continued to face one of the world's most severe humanitarian and economic crises in 2024. The economy contracted by 7.1%¹. Over 80% of Lebanon's population

lives in multidimensional poverty, reflecting severe and overlapping deprivations in health, education, and living standards². Among Syrian refugees, 76% of households live in extreme poverty, with limited access to basic services or legal protections³.

Mental health needs have risen sharply: more than 60% of the population show signs of anxiety, depression, or trauma⁴. Suicide rates increased by over 20%, with men and Lebanese nationals most affected⁵.

In autumn 2024, armed escalation between Hezbollah and Israel displaced nearly 500,000 people, especially in South Lebanon and the Beqaa Valley, where ClimbAID operates⁶. The destruction of homes, farmland, and infrastructure deepened existing vulnerabilities⁷.

¹ World Bank, Lebanon Economic Monitor, Spring 2025.

² UNDP/ESCWA, 2021–2022 Update

³ UNHCR/UNICEF/WFP, VASyR 2024

⁴ MHPSS Collaborative, Lebanon Mental Health Crisis Report, 2025.

⁵ Now Lebanon, Suicide Rates in Lebanon, 2024.

⁶ OCHA Lebanon, Conflict Impact Updates, 2024.

⁷ The Guardian, Lebanon's Farmers Lose Everything, 2024.

In December, the Assad regime in Syria collapsed, triggering new waves of displacement and insecurity along Lebanon's eastern border⁸. Although the fall raised hopes for the return of Syrians, political reforms and economic growth in the region, the immediate consequence was further instability.

Despite positive political developments in Lebanon in early 2025, including cautious reforms and a new central bank governor⁹, the outlook remained uncertain. Vulnerable groups—including refugees, youth, and low-income families—remain largely excluded from recovery gains.

PROGRAMMES

ClimbAID reached a total of 212 children, adolescents, and young adults in Lebanon's Beqaa Valley through 249 climbing and psycho-social support sessions.

While activities were planned across multiple programmes, many sessions had to be cancelled due to the escalation of the Israel-Hezbollah war in the autumn. When displaced families moved to our partner's compound, we adapted and delivered 42 improvised "Khan Sessions" for the children.

Two "Route-Setting for Peace" workshops were successfully held in collaboration with the Lebanese Climbing Federation and Swiss professionals, promoting skills development and community connection.

YOUCLIMB

Due to a reduced team and the challenges posed by the conflict, we ran a limited outreach campaign for our core programme YouCLIMB, focused mainly on our existing community. This resulted in one trial session and a single group of eight participants for this year's YouCLIMB cycle.

YouCLIMB explores themes such as trust, respect, teamwork, and cooperation through climbing-based activities like blindfolded climbing, rope swings, and problem-solving challenges. Participants reflected on the importance of listening, adapting strategies, and supporting one another.

"During the mountain climbing activity, we learned from our mistakes, and each mistake was a success for us... we divided roles among ourselves and made sure not to put pressure on anyone beyond what they could handle."

OPENARC

In June, we launched the OpenARC project, opening the doors of our climbing wall The ARC to the public in collaboration with Al Khan Al Maksoud, aiming to generate income and put the Beqaa project on more sustainable feet.



The opening brought together locals, partner organisations, and outdoor enthusiasts for an afternoon of climbing games, prizes, snacks, and community connection. Over the summer, we expanded our offer with guided outdoor climbing trips to Wadi al Dalm, open to all skill levels and supported by local partner Domaine de Chouchène.

Although we gained regular customers, the ongoing conflict made it clear too soon that

⁸ AP News, Fall of Bashar Assad, 2024.

⁹ AP News, New Central Bank Governor Appointed, 2025.

operating like a regular bouldering gym on a profitable basis would be challenging. As hostilities intensified in autumn, most people remained close to their homes and villages to avoid the risks of travel, particularly across highways and areas frequently targeted by Israeli strikes.

With safety as our priority, we suspended operations alongside all other activities in autumn when the conflict intensified.

KHAN SESSIONS

Families displaced from the Baalbek region by the war found temporary refuge at the compound of our partner arcenciel in Taanayel, where our climbing wall is located.

Over seven weeks, we conducted 42 psychosocial bouldering sessions for 49 children and young adults aged 4 to 25 in collaboration with our partner arcenciel. These “Khan Sessions,” as we called them, were delivered by a reduced team of facilitators and loosely based on our YouCLIMB approach, but with a stronger focus on play and free climbing. They provided opportunities for movement, recreation, and social interaction—offering moments of relief from the strain of displacement.



As soon as the ceasefire was announced, the families left as suddenly as they had arrived, returning to homes that were often damaged

or destroyed, before we could carry out the planned monitoring and evaluation.

ROUTE-SETTING FOR PEACE

In collaboration with the Lebanese Federation of Climbing and Mountaineering and professional route setters David Tomlinson and Alise Zvigule from Switzerland, we organised route-setting workshops that combined technical instruction with creative problem-solving in route setting.



9 participants—climbers from diverse regions and backgrounds—were highly motivated, and the workshops emphasised not only skill development but also collaboration and dialogue.

A third workshop and a planned bouldering competition in Beirut were envisioned as the next steps but ultimately did not take place with our involvement due to the escalation of conflict.

CLIMBABILITY

Following the successful completion of our 2023 ClimbABILITY project with arcenciel, we introduced community sessions for ClimbABILITY participants as part of our commitment to including at least 5% participants with disabilities in our activities in the Bekaa.

Over the year, we ran 14 such sessions, open to both ClimbABILITY participants and the wider community, and began reaching out to other potential partner organisations in the area to expand our reach. While the initiative

showed early promise, it had to be halted when a funding request did not materialise, leaving us unable to cover the rising transportation costs.

ACADEMY

Medyan Alahmad and Hassan Shehadeh assumed leadership of the ACADEMY from 2024 onwards, supported by Nabihah Alrazak.

To strengthen their technical and coaching capacities, Robert Spoerri – former Lebanon volunteer and experienced climbing coach – delivered online workshops and guided them in structured training development. Sessions followed a macro plan focused on strength, power, endurance, and competition preparation, supported by benchmarking every three months.

In total, 70 performance-based ACADEMY sessions were delivered at The ARC in Taanayel, divided into two groups according to climbing level. The programme continued to combine athletic development with peace-building workshops, fostering trust, cooperation, and inclusion among Syrian, Palestinian, and Lebanese athletes.

WOMEN'S TEAM

21 volunteer-run women's team sessions took place, offering a dedicated space for 22 female climbers to train, build confidence, and strengthen bonds across communities. These sessions created an empowering environment where participants could progress in climbing while supporting one another, both on and off the wall.

MOVEMENT SESSIONS

When the conflict made it impossible for many to climb at The ARC, we started to organise online movement sessions with Gilles Sainte-Marie, a former volunteer. These sessions invited participants to explore simple movement tools, reconnect with their bodies, and access

play, creativity, and joy—even in times of uncertainty.



ORGANISATION

Nabihah Razak took over the role of Lebanon project lead from Charles Sifri at the end of 2023. Having previously volunteered on site in 2023 with her partner, she returned to Lebanon in May 2024. However, due to the deteriorating security situation, she had to leave the country again by October.

Nabihah continues to advise ClimbAID in a consultative role, particularly on topics related to mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS).

CONTINUING COMMITMENT

The deteriorating security situation and an extremely limited pool of qualified local staff made it increasingly difficult to continue our work in the Bekaa Valley. As a result, we had to make the difficult decision to our programmes from 2025 onwards.

Despite this, we remain committed to supporting the local community and ensuring that the climbing wall remains available as a shared resource. To that end, we continue to cover essential costs such as rent, maintenance, and accident insurance.



While initial efforts to establish a local association have not yet materialised, we still believe in the long-term potential of community-led management and are open to supporting such an initiative if local ownership strengthens over time.

In parallel, we are exploring new avenues for the future of climbing-based psychosocial support in Lebanon. These include reactivating A Rolling Rock, our mobile climbing wall, and expanding the YouCLIMB programme in Beirut. We are also developing partnerships with Beirut-based non-profits to co-create inclusive and impactful initiatives that respond to the evolving needs on the ground.

PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

We are happy and grateful for the support of our local partners, who help make our work in Lebanon possible.



arcenciel.org
engage in development



Domaine
de Chouchane



LEBANESE FEDERATION OF
CLIMBING AND MOUNTAINEERING



The film SAMA tells the story of Hiba, a Syrian who fled to Lebanon, and Sabine, a young woman from the Lebanese town of Bar Elias. What brings them together is their shared love for climbing – a passion they discovered through ClimbAID's project in the Bekaa Valley. It's about young people whose lives are shaped by displacement, exclusion, and the search for identity – and also by friendship, trust, and hope.

Filed in 2022 and 2023, against the backdrop of Lebanon's economic collapse, bread crisis, deportations, and political turmoil, SAMA opens a rare window into a different reality: one of connection, movement, and humanity.

At a time when media coverage of the Middle East is dominated by war and despair, SAMA reveals a lesser-seen perspective – the power of sport to heal, unite, and transform lives.

climbaid.org/sama



SWITZERLAND

In 2024, the project expanded to 15 families, with 599 sessions and other activities involving almost 1'250 individuals, including 146 active volunteers.

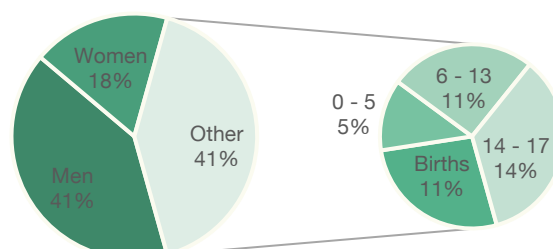
MaxiGrimper in Lausanne and MaxiQuadrel in Felsberg joined the Maxi Family, and the foundation for MaxiWorb in Worb was laid at the end of the year.

CONTEXT

In 2024, Switzerland received 27,740 asylum applications, marking a decrease of 8.2% compared to the previous year's 30,223. This continued high level reflects persistent global and regional crises.

The main countries of origin were Afghanistan (8,627), Turkey (4,107), Algeria (2,110), Eritrea (2,093), and Syria (1,438)¹⁰.

According to Save the Children, 41% of all new asylum applications in 2024 were submitted by children, amounting to 11,469 minors. This share has remained consistently high in recent years, underlining the significant presence and vulnerability of children in the Swiss asylum system. The gender distribution among applicants was approximately 62% male and 38% female¹¹.



¹⁰ SEM, Asylstatistik 2024 – Jahresbericht, Staatssekretariat für Migration (SEM), 2025.

¹¹ Save the Children Switzerland, Asylum Statistics 2024: 41% of Applications Are from Children, 17 February 2025.

Asylum seekers face a complex array of challenges that hinder their integration into Swiss society. These include legal insecurity, prolonged waiting periods, and restrictions on employment and movement, particularly for those on N and F permits. Many are housed in federal or cantonal reception centres, including makeshift facilities like bunkers, which often lack privacy, daylight, or adequate living conditions¹². Discrimination in housing, employment, and public life remains widespread, with xenophobia and institutional racism continuing to shape refugee experiences¹³.

These structural and social barriers, combined with past trauma and post-migration stress, contribute to a high prevalence of mental health issues, especially post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety. Access to mental health care is limited by language barriers, stigma, a lack of specialised services, and insufficient funding for interpreters—leaving many without adequate support¹⁴.

Although Switzerland faces labour shortages in sectors such as healthcare, construction, and hospitality, asylum seekers and refugees remain under-employed due to systemic and legal barriers. Asylum seekers on N permits are barred from working during their first months in Switzerland and can only access the labour market afterwards under restrictive conditions. This helps explain why, as of November 2024, only 4.9% of them were employed, compared with 43.5% of provisionally admitted persons, 40.5% of recognised refugees, and 29.2% of people with temporary protection (Status S)¹⁵. Failed integration not only leads to chronic dependency and isolation but also carries long-term economic and social costs for Swiss society¹⁶.

In this context, ClimbAID's initiatives play a crucial role. By providing inclusive climbing-based activities, ClimbAID offers safe spaces where asylum seekers can reduce stress, connect with others, and rebuild self-confidence. Our programs support mental well-being, encourage social participation, and help break down barriers to integration—offering a vital lifeline to individuals who might otherwise remain on the margins of society.

OBJECTIVES

ClimbAID's project is dedicated to supporting the mental well-being and social integration of asylum seekers and refugees. The project is underpinned by three primary objectives:

Enhance Mental Health: We utilize climbing to boost mood, reduce depression and anxiety, and promote mindfulness. Climbing provides a physical outlet for stress and offers a sense of accomplishment and joy.

Promote Integration: We use sport as a tool for social interaction, cultural exchange, and engagement. Climbing sessions bring together individuals from diverse backgrounds, fostering mutual understanding and respect.

Foster Social Participation: We encourage asylum seekers to participate in social activities, build networks, and contribute to the community. By engaging in climbing and social events, participants become active members of their local communities and build valuable social networks.

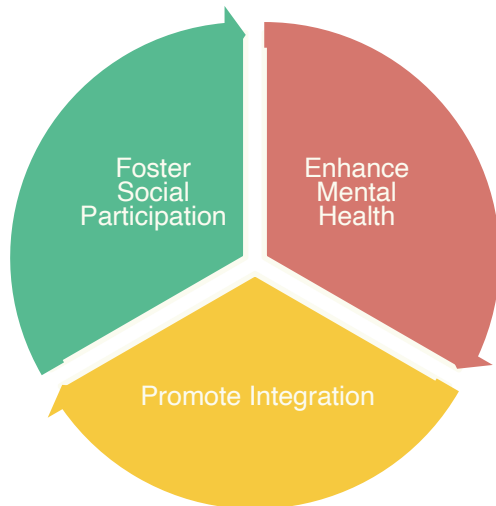
¹² Swiss Refugee Council, Shelter in Civil Protection Facilities, 2023.

¹³ Federal Commission against Racism, Annual Report 2023.

¹⁴ SPIRIT Project, Scaling Up Psychological Interventions in Refugees in Switzerland, 2024.

¹⁵ UNHCR, Resources for employers in Switzerland. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, November 2024

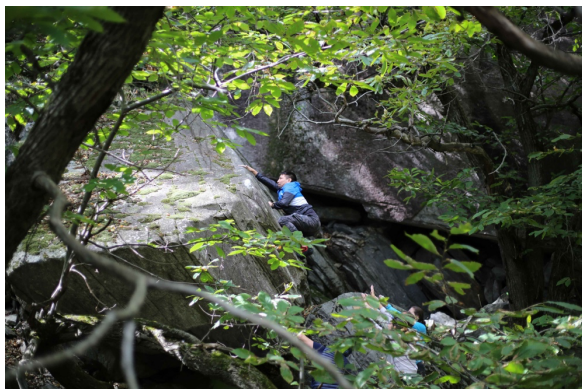
¹⁶ Swiss Refugee Council, From Temporary to Permanent? Integration Prospects of F Permit Holders, 2024.



HIGHLIGHTS

BOULDERING WEEKEND

On 14–15 September, ClimbAID’s annual Boulder Weekend took place in Chironico (Ticino), bringing together 76 participants from across Switzerland.



For many, it was their first time climbing outdoors—a powerful experience that combined movement, nature, and connection. The weekend united refugees, volunteers, and local climbers in a joyful and inclusive atmosphere.

“This event was one of the most informative and unforgettable experiences I’ve had in Switzerland. It not only improved my climbing skills but also helped me develop my language abilities.”

— Ali

Participants took on responsibilities such as cooking and cleaning, strengthening the group’s sense of ownership and teamwork. The Saturday evening gathering featured games, conversations, and dancing, while Sunday brought more climbing under the warm sun—allowing everyone to push their limits and grow together.

“This community, this bouldering party, is one of the reasons I was drawn to the sport. It doesn’t matter if you’re tall or short, strong or weak—everyone finds their own way to overcome the rock.”

— Olha

CLIMBAID FEATURED IN DIE ALPEN

ClimbAID’s work was featured in Die Alpen—the official magazine of the Swiss Alpine Club (SAC)—through the powerful story of Luul Yemane.



Text: Alexandra Roskosny
Fotos: Hugo Vincent

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The article sheds light on Luul’s journey from crossing the Sahara and the Mediterranean at age 14 to discovering a second family in Switzerland through climbing. Today, he

volunteers with ClimbAID’s MaxiPlus group at 6a Plus, inspiring others to find belonging and purpose on the climbing wall.

We are proud to see our mission and impact recognised in such a widely read publication, and thankful to SAC for helping share the transformative power of climbing with a broader audience.

Read the full article at climbaid.org/media.

YOUTH+SPORT: A FIRST GRADUATE

As the first former participant to do so, Robel Goitom successfully completed the official Youth+Sport (J+S) Leader course in sport climbing in Arcegno (Ticino). For Robel, this achievement marked not only a step toward becoming an instructor—but also a deeply personal journey.

“The atmosphere was fantastic. I learned a lot about climbing, but more importantly, I made new friends and realised how much I want to work with children and youth through climbing. This community showed me that caring for each other and for nature is more important than chasing material things.”

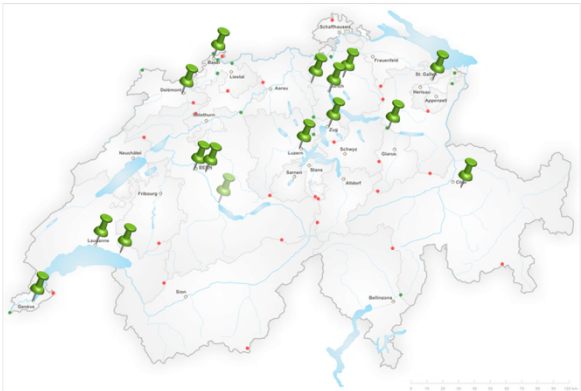
— Robel



THE MAXI FAMILIES

In 2024, the MaxiFamily project expanded to 15 groups across Switzerland, involving

approximately 1’250 individuals, including 1’119 refugees and 146 active volunteers. This marks a significant increase in reach and diversity compared to previous years.



	Participants	Thereof Refugees	Thereof Volunteers
MaxiBaar	49	41	8
MaxiBloc	146	135	15
MaxiBOUBA	77	66	13
MaxiCity	63	55	11
MaxiFelsly	44	37	8
MaxiGallus	173	165	10
MaxiGrimper	36	26	10
MaxiLinth	91	86	5
maxiMiNimum	151	137	18
MaxiPlanet	37	30	8
MaxiPlus	193	180	14
MaxiQuadrel	67	59	8
MaxiTotem	67	58	9
MaxiUP	47	41	6
MaxiWorb	3	0	3
None	2	2	0
Total	1247	1119	146

In total, 599 activities took place, ranging from weekly climbing sessions to social gatherings, route-setting sessions, and a national bouldering weekend. On average, each activity engaged 10 participants, reflecting both consistent attendance and group-specific dynamics.

	Sessions	Average Participation
MaxiFamily Switzerland	3	58
MaxiArea	60	10
MaxiBloc	53	15
MaxiBOUBA	54	13
MaxiCity	52	8
MaxiFelsly	26	8
MaxiGallus	42	16
MaxiGrimper	14	10
MaxiLinth	39	9
maxiMiNimum	65	11
MaxiPlanet	27	8
MaxiPlus	81	9
MaxiQuadrel	29	8
MaxiTotem	42	5
MaxiUP	12	5
Total	599	10

Participants across all MaxiFamilies reported a strong sense of belonging and personal accomplishment through climbing. The inclusive, low-threshold sessions fostered intercultural exchange, social connection, and mutual understanding, helping to break down cultural barriers and build shared experiences across diverse communities.

MAXIMINIMUM IN ZURICH

maxiMiNimum continued to build a strong sense of community, supported by a consistent group of around five regular participants and a steady flow of newcomers. Collaborations with AOZ and Sportegration remained central, regularly introducing new, motivated participants—especially during monthly sessions with young asylum seekers.



An additional session with Netz4 and the much-enjoyed Pizza & Boulder evening at the Würfel—our outdoor bouldering cube on the Stadionbrache—brought extra energy and joy to the group. Friendships deepened both on and off the wall, with some participants meeting outside of sessions for climbing or social gatherings.

We are especially grateful for the continued support of the Minimum bouldering gym, whose welcoming space forms the heart of our weekly activities. A major milestone in 2024 was the three-year funding commitment from the City of Zurich, allowing maxiMiNimum to run its activities sustainably and with greater planning security.

Looking ahead to 2025, the team plans to explore new ways to recruit and re-engage volunteers, ensuring the continuation of regular sessions and further strengthening the group spirit.

maxiMiNimum's activities were coordinated by Angela Tsang, Dimitri Gerster, Lhamo Meyer, and, since 2024, also Maria Cervera.

MAXICITY IN LUCERNE

MaxiCity continued to grow in strength and spirit. Outreach activities brought in new participants—some joined for a few sessions, while others became highly dedicated, like Mohammad (aka Valiant), who received support to get his own gym membership and now climbs independently two to three times a week.



Summer also brought additional outdoor sessions at the new boulder block behind Lucerne's old town at Bramberg, as well as some spontaneous bouldering at the well-known spot next to the Mariahilf school—creating memorable late evenings filled with movement, laughter, and community.

A highlight for the group was once again the Boulder Weekend in Chironico, which offered space for connection, fun, and shared experience across the wider MaxiFamily. MaxiCity was also proudly represented at the local City Games competition, with four participants taking part.

As part of its outreach, MaxiCity organised three trial sessions in collaboration with the "Koordination Sport- und Bewegungsangebote MNA" and the Grosshof MNA centre, as well as two sessions for children and families, further expanding the group's reach and inclusivity.

Described as familiar, fun, easy-going, and uplifting, the group atmosphere grew even stronger in 2024. Many felt that the close-knit, family-like dynamic had returned, fostering trust and deepening commitment across the group.

Looking ahead, MaxiCity will continue to focus on strengthening community ties and building on the solid foundation laid in 2024.

The group is coordinated by Pablo Gabriel, with support from Beat Baggenstos.

MAXIPLUS IN WINTERTHUR

MaxiPlus held bouldering sessions on Thursdays and Sundays at 6a plus climbing gym in Winterthur. The Thursday sessions continued to draw a core group of around ten regular participants, with new faces joining throughout the year—often thanks to the interaction with local climbers during peak hours, which also helped attract new volunteers.

The Sunday sessions, held in collaboration with BAZ Embrach, brought together participants of all ages and backgrounds. While finding volunteers for Sundays remained a challenge, the team decided to stick with this day due to lower gym occupancy and its suitability for families and newcomers. In 2025, a new initiative will see several volunteers trained to use the rope parcours, enabling more child-friendly activities in these sessions.



Highlights of the year included the Boulder Weekend in Chironico, where several participants returned for the second year in a row; a climbing weekend with SAC Rinsberg in July; and participation in the "Boulderplausch" team competition in February. MaxiPlus also organised bouldering intro sessions for a group from the Swiss Red Cross and for Sportegration participants, in collaboration with 6a plus.

Luul's new position at 6a plus further strengthened the already close partnership between

the gym and the group. The volunteer team remained stable, with three new volunteers joining and many long-standing team members continuing their commitment. Regular participant Shonm also began transitioning into a volunteer role.

Beyond climbing, MaxiPlus continues to foster language learning, social connection, and visibility within the local climbing community, all within a warm and supportive atmosphere.

MaxiPlus was coordinated by Luul Yemane and Leah Reicherzer in 2024.

MAXILINTH IN NÄFELS

MaxiLinth maintained steady participation from the asylum center Bergruh in Amden, holding sessions at GLKB Boulderhalle. Despite the temporary stay of the asylum seekers, the sessions were well-attended and provided a positive and supportive environment. Participants expressed appreciation for the opportunity to engage in physical activity and socialize outside the asylum center.

Looking forward, the group plans to participate in the boulder competition Zigerschwitz and focus on building a consistent participant base in 2024.

MaxiLinth's activities were coordinated by Joane Steiner.

MAXIBLOC IN BERN

MaxiBLOC continued to thrive as a large and close-knit climbing group in Bern, meeting weekly at O'BLOC, whose open and welcoming support plays a key role in enabling the sessions. With around 15 participants per session, the group maintained high consistency throughout the year—never needing to cancel due to a lack of volunteers or participants.



Many participants come from Ukraine, though the group regularly includes a mix of nationalities. The atmosphere is described as motivated, friendly, and fun, with strong friendships developing both during and beyond the sessions.

A major development in 2024 was that four participants completed the Toprope course and became active volunteers, strengthening the volunteer base and deepening a sense of shared ownership. Regular volunteers take turns leading at least one session per month, forming a reliable and committed team.

Our collaborations with Mazay Kaffee and Sportegration also brought in new participants, and further outreach is planned to strengthen these connections.

Beyond the climbing gym, the group came together for a well-attended games and picnic afternoon in the park in spring. MaxiBLOC is a meaningful space for connection, encouragement, and personal growth—a climbing “family” for many of its members.

The group was coordinated by Marion Rissi and Sarah Germann.

MAXIGALLUS IN ST. GALLEN

MaxiGallus ran weekly climbing sessions on Wednesday afternoons at the Kletterzentrum St. Gallen, supported by a dedicated team of nine volunteers. The team has grown increasingly close-knit, with the December team dinner highlighting a strong sense of cohesion and shared responsibility. Notably, Jafer and Amir, both former participants, have developed into confident and proactive volunteers, regularly engaging and supporting new climbers.

The group remained well attended throughout the year, with a mix of regular participants—particularly from Ukraine—and rotating attendees from BAZ Altstätten. While the collaboration with Asylzentrum Niederuzwil came to an end, the partnership with Altstätten remains strong. New connections are emerging as well—for example, with the Migration Office in Wil.



New participants continue to join through word-of-mouth and community referrals. Several long-standing Ukrainian participants have moved on due to education or employment—an encouraging sign of integration—while new arrivals continue to find their way into the group.

Beyond the weekly sessions, MaxiGallus organised an outing to the climbing crag Brochne Burg near Sargans, which was a highlight for everyone. The group also took part in the Boulder Weekend in Chironico,

where they coordinated the cooking—expertly led by Elena, and fondly remembered in a “legendary” video.

As a recognised and trusted presence in the gym, MaxiGallus is warmly greeted by other climbers. The group has built a deep and lasting presence in the local climbing community, maintaining its visibility and continuity for over five and a half years.

MaxiGallus is currently coordinated by Karin Steinbach Tarnutzer, with Elena Policante preparing to take over the role in 2025.

MAXIAREA IN ZUG

MaxiArea continued its weekly climbing sessions at BoulderArea in Zug, offering a warm and supportive space for a dedicated group of participants. Each session was attended by a stable group of five to ten participants, with the group remaining largely unchanged throughout the year. Most participants had joined in previous years through outreach efforts in collaboration with FRW Zug and the Lorzenmatt asylum centre.

The group was supported by four dedicated volunteers, and a strong team spirit developed over the course of the year. The sessions were marked by mutual encouragement, with more experienced climbers routinely supporting beginners. One notable development was the growing interaction with the local climbing community, as participants increasingly connected with other climbers with confidence.



A highlight of the year was the outdoor bouldering session in Arth-Goldau, organised by Dmitry, which brought together more than 20 participants for a joyful day of climbing in nature. The team looks forward to repeating similar activities in 2025.

Looking ahead, a major change will be the relocation of the bouldering gym to Baar, which will result in a six-week break from climbing. The goal is to keep the group engaged during the transition and ensure that everyone returns once the new site opens.

At the end of 2024, Alessia Gervasoni stepped down from her role as co-coordinator. Ben Rujil has taken over the role alongside Liesbeth Deddens, ensuring continuity and strong support for the group in 2025.

MAXIUP IN DELÉMONT

MaxiUP held its regular sessions at BlocUP in Delémont, creating a friendly and welcoming atmosphere for participants—though group size remained small and fluctuating. Aleksey and his friends formed the core of a loosely rotating group, with typically only two to three participants attending each session. Despite the limited numbers, the atmosphere was consistently described as joyful, respectful, and friendly.



The team welcomed three new volunteers and strengthened its partnership with the

Association jurassienne de l'accueil des migrants (AJAM), which promotes migrant integration in the canton of Jura. AJAM has helped raise awareness about MaxiUP through local volunteer networks and events. Two special climbing sessions were organised in collaboration with the Centre d'animation et de formation pour femmes et familles (CAFF).

While most participants are new each time and long-term impact is difficult to measure, feedback has been consistently positive—participants leave the sessions grateful, smiling, and energised. One success story is Aleksey, who now climbs independently and holds his own subscription at BlocUP.

MaxiUP was coordinated by Romain Chiffelle and Katherine Choong. In 2024, Romain was succeeded by Julien Bahisson.

MAXIFELSLY IN BASEL

MaxiFelsly continued to offer weekly sessions at ELYS Boulderloft every Saturday, creating an inclusive space where people from diverse backgrounds can climb together, connect, and grow. The welcoming atmosphere has gained recognition among other gym visitors, who appreciate the energy and positive atmosphere the group brings.

An important development this year was the launch of a collaboration between ClimbAID and SAC Basel with the aim of integrating people with a refugee background into the structures of SAC Basel. The initiative enables the young participants of MaxiFelsly to join the youth organisation (JO) of SAC Basel and the older participants to join the "Klettertreff", where they learn rope climbing under the guidance of experienced climbers and meet locals in their age group.



By late 2024, participants such as Farhad and Sadeq had joined the SAC Basel Klettertreff, where they quickly became valued members. Further courses and activities are planned for 2025.

We are grateful for the continued support of K7 climbing gym for discounted access and to SAC Basel for funding the joint activities.

MaxiFelsly was coordinated by Maximian Schmidt and Sadeq Ahmadi.

MAXITOTEM IN VEVEY

MaxiTotem, based in Vevey, experienced a turning point in 2024 after a period of low attendance and volunteer demotivation. A volunteer meeting early in the year helped reset priorities and strengthen the group's commitment. This was followed by outreach to new EVAM shelters, supported by updated flyers, which successfully brought in new participants—including adults—and reinvigorated the group dynamic. The result was a noticeable improvement in both energy and engagement, with very positive feedback from participants and volunteers alike.



The team welcomed two new volunteers, while three others left, maintaining a volunteer team of eight overall.

For the first time, MaxiTotem participated in the ClimbAID Boulder Weekend, with one volunteer and two participants joining and returning with great feedback. The group also began collaborating with the newly launched MaxiGrimper project in Lausanne, including two joint sessions and shared involvement in the Christmas market.

The atmosphere has been described as friendly, motivating, and supportive, both in terms of sport and personal development. Curiosity and support from the wider Totem Escalade gym community have increased, with more climbers getting involved in welcoming and integrating participants from MaxiTotem.

MaxiTotem is coordinated by Sergio Marco and, since 2024, Paul Leclerc.

MAXIPLANET IN GENEVA

MaxiPlanet experienced a year of growth and renewed structure in 2024. Thanks to the commitment of volunteers and the enthusiasm of participants, the weekly sessions offered a welcoming space for exchange, inclusion, and self-confidence building. While attendance varied from week to week, many new faces joined the group, and returning participants helped create a dynamic, multi-generational environment.



The climbing sessions are characterised by three key elements: friendliness, with a spirit of friendship and mutual support always present; joy, with plenty of laughter and a light-hearted, relaxed atmosphere; and relaxation, with a playful approach that puts everyone at ease. The group has become a positive and valued part of Planet Climbing Gym. Other climbers actively welcome the respectful and friendly dynamic that has taken shape, which helps integrate the young participants more fully into the local climbing community.

One of the year's highlights was the summer camp in Valais, organised in collaboration with Roockie Slash. The week-long programme included outdoor climbing, alpine hiking, and nature-based group activities—creating deep bonds and unforgettable memories. The rope climbing initiation during the year also stood out as a milestone, helping participants push their limits and discover new dimensions of climbing.

MaxiPlanet was coordinated by Carlos Alonso Morales.

MAXIBOUBA IN BADEN

MaxiBOUBA continued to thrive in 2024, with a strong and consistent core of participants who rarely missed a session. Friendships deepened, climbing levels improved, and the group atmosphere was consistently described as joyful, open, ambitious, and respectful. Everyone knows and supports each other, and the motivation within the group is tangible.

Sessions took place weekly at BOUBA bouldering gym, where the group has become a familiar and valued presence. Their enthusiasm, cheering, and laughter are now well known among other gymgoers, many of whom greet and chat with MaxiBOUBA participants—creating informal connections with the broader climbing community.

Several trial and holiday sessions were also held in collaboration with asylum centres in Untersiggenthal, Villmergen, and Unterentfelden. While these larger sessions required extra effort from the volunteer team, they successfully led to new participants who have since joined the regular group and brought fresh energy.



Throughout the year, the group took part in a number of memorable events. During the Day of the Refugee, they set up a stand and baked cakes together—an activity more fun than profitable, but warmly remembered by all. Two participants competed in the Blockchäfer bouldering competition, including one who had only climbed twice before. The Boulder Weekend in Chironico was once again a highlight, with five participants and three volunteers attending, forming stronger bonds through bouldering, shared meals, and a multicultural disco. The year concluded with a festive bouldering session and homemade sweets in the BOUBA bistro.

A key development in 2024 was the transition of Tanja and Michael, two long-time participants, into volunteer roles. Others began

apprenticeships and now attend less often—but stay connected and often return during holidays or for special events. Several participants also made notable progress in their German language skills.

The group continues to collaborate with Netzwerk Asyl, which helps cover public transport costs and supports joint participation in events.

MaxiBOUBA was coordinated by Lea Lehmann and Lukas Fleischman.

MAXIQUADREL IN FELSBERG

MaxiQuadrel looks back on a successful first year of weekly climbing sessions held at Quadrel Boulderhalle in Felsberg. The group consisted of a stable and motivated core of five to ten participants, mostly from Afghanistan. While still male-dominated, two women have become regular participants, and involving more women remains a key priority.

The sessions were characterised by a calm, focused, and encouraging atmosphere, with participants steadily gaining confidence and strength. Many travelled from remote places such as Disentis or Pany, reflecting the dedication required to access the gym. The geographical isolation of some asylum centres and the closure of nearby accommodations posed ongoing challenges. The year concluded with a shared soup dinner, fostering a warm and supportive community feeling beyond the wall.



The group receives financial support from the integration fund of the Canton of Grisons, which enables its ongoing activities. For 2025, the team is planning its first top rope climbing event and is building a collaboration with ap n daun in Chur to further expand access and continuity.

MaxiQuadrel was initiated by Jan Hermle, Jenna Buttermann, Joana Horni, and Louisa Gnann.

MAXIGRIMPER IN LAUSANNE

Our project in Lausanne successfully re-launched under the name MaxiGrimper at the bouldering gym Grimper.ch Beaulieu in September 2024, following a long inactive phase. A new coordination team and the new location brought much-needed momentum to the project—finally establishing a strong and consistent presence in the city of Lausanne.



The new team visited the nearby asylum centre, just a short walk from the gym, several times during the initial weeks to introduce the project and motivate residents to join. These outreach efforts proved effective: within just a few months. A committed core of regular participants quickly formed, showing strong engagement, rapid progress, and a serious interest in climbing.

The group met every Friday evening, and by the end of the year, sessions regularly brought together more than 20 people, creating a lively, welcoming, and motivated atmosphere. Volunteers and participants alike described MaxiGrimper as a highlight of their week.

To close the year, the group hosted a Christmas gathering and flea market, featuring lost-and-found items from the gym. Proceeds from the event were donated to ClimbAID.

MaxiGrimper was initiated by Elvire Genet and Diana Avalos.

ORGANISATION

To support ClimbAID's growth in Switzerland, a 20% position for project and administrative support was created. Caroline Mayer took on the role in mid-2024 and was succeeded in January 2025 by Margrit John, a long-time volunteer with MaxiGallus. This addition has significantly eased Beat's workload, allowing for greater focus on programme quality, coordinator support, and volunteer engagement.

PARTNER GYMS

Climbing and bouldering gyms are the backbone of ClimbAID's MaxiFamily project. These partners provide the essential space and infrastructure needed for conducting regular climbing sessions. Their support ensures that participants have a safe and welcoming environment to engage in climbing activities.



PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

Associations, SAC sections, asylum organisations, and other local partners are key pillars of the MaxiFamily project. Through collaboration, they help us reach new participants, build bridges to existing structures, and offer meaningful support beyond the climbing wall. Whether by co-organising events, facilitating outreach, covering transport costs, or integrating our participants into their own programmes, these partnerships are essential for the long-term success, visibility, and impact of our work.



ORGANISATION

ONLINE LIBRARY

ClimbAID's new internal library has been launched. It provides coordinators and volunteers with searchable resources for planning MaxiFamily sessions, recorded trainings (e.g. on asylum law), an overview of climbing gyms, and other useful materials for project implementation.

IMPACT ORIENTATION

Founder and Director Beat Baggenstos completed a Certificate of Advanced Studies in Impact Management at the University of Basel in late 2024. One of its outcomes is the development and implementation of a standardised evaluation system for ClimbAID Switzerland to better measure the impact and quality of its programme. The

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

ClimbAID recorded a modest deficit of CHF 5'540. This was primarily due to lower project expenditures in Lebanon caused by security-related disruptions, while core costs such as salaries and administration remained stable.

Total income reached CHF 126'031, supported by donations, released restricted funds, and key partner contributions. Programme-related costs remained the largest expense category, with CHF 48'978 spent directly on project implementation.

Personnel costs amounted to CHF 68'206 and primarily reflect time spent on project coordination, implementation, volunteer support, and programme development — including the director's direct involvement in operational delivery.

The balance sheet shows strong liquidity (CHF 101'881 in cash and equivalents) and a

significant increase in restricted funds, securing the organisation's ability to maintain and expand activities in 2025.

PARTNERS

This year would not have been possible without the financial support of our main partners Mammut, Temperatio Foundation and Minimum:



Other larger donations were made by the Canton of Grison, the City of Zurich, peka-metall AG, FIR Group AG, TOPROPE GmbH and ZS Consulting.



FINANCIAL STATEMENT 2024

BALANCE SHEET

Assets	31.12.2024	31.12.2023
Current assets	103'587	61'120
Cash and cash equivalents	101'881	59'966
Accounts receivable	1'706	50
Other assets	0	1'104
Non-current assets	567	1'132
Total Assets	104'154	62'251

Liabilities	31.12.2024	31.12.2023
Short-term outside capital	21'443	18'942
Liabilities	6'983	378
Other current liabilities	1'947	7'112
Accruals and short-term provisions	12'512	11'451
Long-term outside capital	0	0
Restricted Funds	44'942	0
Organisational Capital	37'769	43'310
Total liabilities	104'154	62'251

INCOME STATEMENT

Income	2024	2023
Donations and membership fees	103'532	104'400
Released restricted funds	16'199	0
Trading & services	5'332	3'016
Financial income	34	0
Currency gains	451	0
Other income	483	12
Total income	126'031	107'429

Programme costs	2024	2023
Project costs	-48'535	-58'711
Material costs	-443	-2'733
Event costs	0	-250
Other costs	0	-351
Total programme costs	-48'978	-62'044

Personnel costs	2024	2023
Salaries	-58'400	-51'350
Social security	-8'308	-7'907
Other personnel expenses	-1'498	-3'142
Total Personnel Costs	-68'206	-62'399

Other expenses and amortisation	2024	2023
Office Rent	-4'200	-3'570
Insurance, fees and permits	-472	-283
Administrative and IT expenses	-8'223	-8'435
Fundraising and marketing costs	-2'882	-6'746
Amortisation	-565	-565
Bank charges	-592	-625
Currency losses	0	-35
Total expenses and amortisation	-16'934	-20'259
Total costs	-134'118	-144'702
Extraordinary expenses and income	2'547	-84
Surplus / deficit	-5'540	-37'357

PUBLISHING INFORMATION

EDITORS

Beat Baggenstos

IMAGES

Title Page: SAMA film poster

Intro Page: Still from Sama

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Switzerland: Mirjam Leutwiler, Beat Baggenstos, various others

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